

Message Text

SECRET

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12

ACTION SS-25

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P R 281010Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2681

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 2281

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB FROM AMBASSADOR CRONK

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, MILI, SN

SUBJ: BRIEFING MATERIAL FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB'S

MEETING WITH LEE KUAN YEW

1. IN VIEW OF YOUR EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER LEE AND RAJARATNAM IN WASHINGTON, I DON'T BELIEVE ANY DETAILED BRIEFING PAPERS ARE REQUIRED FOR YOUR VISIT HERE THIS WEEK. SINCE WASHINGTON TALKS, FOLLOWING ARE PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS HERE WHICH LIKELY ARISE IN YOUR DINNER CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER THURSDAY NIGHT:

(A) REQUEST FOR SECONDING OF U.S. AIR FORCE PERSONNEL TO SINGAPORE AIR FORCE (SAF). BELIEVE YOU HAVE SEEN GOS AIDE-MEMOIRE ON THIS SUBJECT PRESENTED BY PRIME MINISTER TO SCHLESINGER. WHILE GOS HAS MADE REQUESTS FOR TDY (MTT) ASSIGNMENTS OF U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL PREVIOUSLY, WHICH IN MOST CASES WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MEET, THIS IS FIRST TIME THEY HAVE ASKED FOR SUCH AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD FORM OF ASSISTANCE FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD OF TIME. ALSO, THIS IS FIRST TIME THEY HAVE SUGGESTED THAT WE IN EFFECT OPERATE OR DIRECT AN ENTIRE BRANCH OF THEIR ARMED FORCES. IN EFFECT, WHAT THEY ARE ASKING IS THAT USAF FILL THE ROLE IN THE SAF WHICH FOR SEVERAL YEARS HAS BEEN HANDLED BY THE BRITISH. ALTHOUGH GOS MAY NOT INTEND IT, THIS

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OBVIOUSLY HAS SEVERAL IMPORTANT POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

1) IT WOULD STRENGTHEN U.S. INFLUENCE HERE, BRING ABOUT A CLOSER U.S. MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH SINGAPORE, HELP ENSURE THE CONTINUED EXCLUSION OF THE USSR FROM USE OF SINGAPORE'S MILITARY FACILITIES, AND LESSEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE GOS MIGHT TURN TO THIRD COUNTRIES FOR THE PURCHASE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. THIS WOULD APPEAR TO BE A PLUS FOR US.

2) ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WOULD INVOLVE THE U.S. IN COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR ONE BRANCH OF THE SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES WHEN IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER SUCH INVOLVEMENT IS EITHER PARTICULARLY RELEVANT TO THE POTENTIAL COMMUNIST THREAT IN SINGAPORE OR NECESSARY TO SATISFY ESSENTIAL U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS.

3) IT COULD ALSO INTRODUCE A POSSIBLY DISCORDANT NOTE INTO ASEAN, ESTRANGE SINGAPORE FURTHER FROM ITS NON-ALIGNED FRIENDS AND MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR GOS TO DEVELOP NORMAL RELATIONS WITH THE DRV AND PRG.

4) IT COULD GENERATE SOME CRITICISM OR AT LEAST UNHAPPINESS WITHIN THE PAP AND PROVIDE AN ISSUE TO THE VERY WEAK AND DIVIDED OPPOSITION.

WE SUGGEST THAT, IF THE MATTER COMES UP, YOU RESPOND CAUTIOUSLY BY SAYING THAT WE WILL STUDY THE REQUEST SERIOUSLY TO DETERMINE WHAT IS FEASIBLE. YOU MIGHT NOTE THAT THE U.S. NEVER "SECONDS" OFFICERS TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, BUT WE WOULD CONSIDER SENDING IN A SMALL TEAM TO STUDY WHETHER THERE ARE SPECIFIC AREAS IN WHICH WE COULD PROVIDE ADVISORY ASSISTANCE ON A REIMBURSABLE BASIS.

(B) REQUEST FOR MAP ASSISTANCE TO COVER COSTS OF MILITARY TRAINING IN U.S. THIS WAS SUBJECT OF ANOTHER AIDE-MEMOIRE HANDED SECDEF BY PRIME MINISTER. WE DON'T THINK THIS REQUEST MAKES MUCH SENSE. GOS HAS HAD NO DIFFICULTY IN GETTING SPACEDCIN U.S. MILITARY SCHOOLS AND OBVIOUSLY CAN EASILY PAY THE COSTS INVOLVED. I THINK YOU SHOULD POINT UP FACT THAT CONGRESS IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CAUTIOUS ABOUT MILITARY AID, AND WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WHY AFFLUENT SINGAPORE SHOULD BECOME A MAP RECIPIENT. YOU MIGHT ALSO POINT OUT GOS WOULD HAVE TO SIGN A MILITARY AID AGREEMENT WITH US, WHICH WOULD BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. A YEAR OR SO AGO THEY BALKED AT SIGNING A ROUTINE AID AGREEMENT TO COVER DONATION OF \$40,000 WORTH OF RADIOS FOR DRUG ENFORCEMENT. THEY SIMPLY DID NOT WANT TO SUFFER THE INDIGNITY OF BECOMING AN AID RECIPIENT. THEY MAY

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HAVE THE MISTAKEN IDEA THAT AID CAN BE EXTENDED WITHOUT PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, IN WHICH CASE YOU MAY BE ABLE TO DISABUSE THEM OF THAT NOTION AND DISCOURAGE THIS REQUEST. IN ANY CASE, I THINK YOU COULD SAY WE WOULD BE FORTHCOMING TO ANY REQUESTS FOR MILITARY TRAINING IN THE U.S. ON A REIMBURSABLE BASIS.

(C) REFUGEE SITUATION. ALMOST ALL OF THE MORE THAN 7,000 REFUGEES WHO WERE IN SINGAPORE WHEN LEE WAS IN WASHINGTON HAVE

GONE TO SUBIC OR GUAM. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN A STEADY INFLUX SINCE THEN AND THERE ARE NOW OVER 900 IN SINGAPORE, QUARTERED ON ST. JOHN'S ISLAND. A UNHCR REP IS HERE AND IS STARTING TO PROCESS THEIR CASES FOR RESETTLEMENT ELSEWHERE. HE HAS ALREADY REFERRED OVER 200 REFUGEES TO THIS EMBASSY FOR RESETTLEMENT IN THE U.S. IT IS UNCLEAR AT THIS TIME HOW MANY THE U.S. IS PREPARED TO TAKE. WHILE THE GOS WAS PRETTY HEARTLESS IN THEIR TREATMENT OF THE FIRST ARRIVALS, THAT IS WATER OVER THE PROVERBIAL DAM. THE GOS IS HANDLING THE PRESENT SITUATION VERY WELL AND IS COOPERATING WITH THE UNHCR AND ICEM.

(D) RETURN OF C-130'S. PURSUANT TO LEE'S DISCUSSIONS WITH YOU IN WASHINGTON, THE GOS TURNED OVER TO US ALL OF THE FORMER C-130'S AND ONE C-47 IN

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2682

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SINGAPORE 2281

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB FROM AMBASSADOR CRONK

THE VNAF WHICH WERE HERE WHEN SOUTH VIETNAM FELL. THEY ARE BEING RETURNED GRADUALLY TO THE U.S. FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF REHAB WORK BY LOCKHEED.

(E) PURCHASE OF C-130'S. THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HAS SEPARATELY REQUESTED THE EMBASSY TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF SELLING THREE OR FOUR USED C-130'S TO SINGAPORE FOR A "REASONABLE" PRICE. THIS IS CURRENTLY UNDER STUDY IN CINCPAC. OUR HOPE IS THAT WE CAN BE REASONABLY FORTHCOMING ON THIS MATTER.

(F) NAVAL BASIN AND FUEL DEPOT. AS YOU ARE AWARE, NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER ROWLING TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT IF LEE WANTED TO HAVE NEW ZEALAND MILITARY MANAGE THE NAVAL BASIN BERTHS AND THE FUEL FACILITY, HE WOULD RECONSIDER THE MATTER. SUBSEQUENTLY, LEE TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT HE WOULD PREFER TO HAVE NEW ZEALAND RUN THESE FACILITIES RATHER THAN DEAL WITH U.S. DIRECTLY. ZURHELLEN HAS TAKEN THIS UP WITH THE NEW ZEALAND AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON, BUT IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF YOU COULD SUGGEST TO LEE THAT GNZ RELUCTANCE PROBABLY COULD BE OVERCOME IF HE OR DR. GOH ASKED GNZ DIRECTLY TO TAKE ON THIS RESPONSIBILITY.

(G) SALE OF M-16'S TO THAILAND. RECENTLY, MINISTER GOH ADVISED ME THAT THE GOS WAS PREPARED TO REACH A SETTLEMENT WITH COLT OVER OUTSTANDING ROYALTIES CONNECTED WITH PRODUCTION OF M-16
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RIFLES BY CHARTERED INDUSTRIES (A GOS-CONTROLLED CORPORATION). GOH HOPED THIS FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT WOULD CLEAR THE WAY FOR THE SALE OF 50,000 M-16 RIFLES TO THAILAND. EMBASSY BANGKOK REPORTS THAT COLT QUESTIONS WHETHER GOS WILL PAY UP AND IS PLANNING TO BREAK THEIR CONTRACT WITH SINGAPORE FOR CAUSE. GIVEN THE POSSIBLY MURKY SITUATION RAISED BY THE L CONFLICTING REPORTS, WE SUGGEST THAT IF THE GOS RAISES THIS WITH YOU, YOU MERELY INDICATE THAT STATE CAN NOT CONSIDER THE QUESTION OF AN MC LICENSE FOR THE SALE OF 50,000 M-16'S TO THAILAND UNTIL COLT PRESENTS A SPECIFIC REQUEST. IF COLT DOES THIS, WE SEE NO REASON WNY THEIR REQUEST WOULD BE DENIED. CRONK

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